

Lyme Disease Case Numbers Increase Nationally Vaccine Removed From Market

California Department of Health Services

The October 2001 *Action Report* included an update article on the epidemiology of Lyme disease (LD) in California. This addendum alerts physicians to two recent announcements pertinent to this tick-borne disease.

In January 2002, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that the total number of LD cases reported in 2000 (17,730) increased by 8% compared to 1999 (16,273). The reported incidence of Lyme disease (per 100,000 population) increased nationwide by about 60% between 1991 (3.96) and 2000 (6.3). In California, despite documented epidemiological elements favorable for the transmission of LD and an expanding population increasingly in contact with natural environments, the yearly number of reported cases has decreased from 265 in 1991 to fewer than 100 cases each year since 1995.

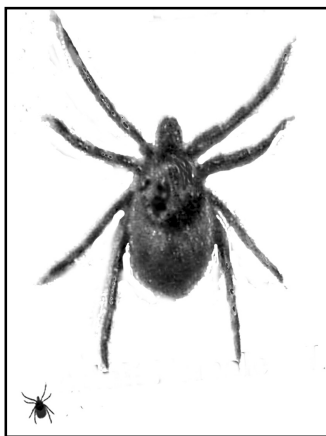
Nevertheless, Lyme disease remains an important vector-borne disease in California because the potential risk of exposure to infected nymphal western black-legged ticks can be moderate to high in some localities.

Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations requires that physicians report all newly diagnosed cases of LD to their local health department. In addition to LD, ticks in California can potentially transmit other disease agents. These diseases are also reportable and include ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, babesiosis, tularemia, and relapsing fever.

In February 2002, GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals announced the removal of LYMERix vaccine, citing poor sales. Tick-bite prevention remains the cornerstone for reducing the risk of exposure to Lyme and other tick-borne diseases.

Physicians are encouraged to remind patients to take precautions, such as wearing light-colored clothing and using tick repellents, while in areas with ticks. Prompt removal of ticks (<24 hours) can prevent transmission of the etiologic agent of LD. The tick should be removed by grasping it with fine-pointed tweezers and pulling it gently but firmly straight out.

For information on Lyme and other vector-borne diseases in California, please visit the California Department of Health Services (DHS) Division of Communicable Disease Control Web site: www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/html/disbindex.htm, or contact DHS at (916) 324-3738.



Western black-legged tick, shown actual size at left.

Source: California
Department of Health
Services

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